



Stanley Krippner's Six Decades of Consciousness Studies

by David Stang

After more than six decades of research in the realm of human consciousness, Professor Stanley Krippner says he has more questions than answers. "But it seems to me that 'there are patterns that connect,' as my friend Gregory Bateson once said, that human beings are a part of a larger whole and that there is a web of nature that encompasses us all and we are not alone out there," he explains. "We are not simply encapsulated by our skin and that's the end of our limits." He adds that if we could just realize the connections that exist between ourselves, other human beings, the rest of nature and perhaps transcendent agencies, it would lead to a much richer and fuller life, as well as a greater sense of responsibility.



Krippner

At age 86, Krippner, who has served on the Academy's advisory council for many years, is still going strong, his mind as sharp as a razor. He is revered by former students and colleagues because of his commitment to encouraging and supporting others. This accomplished scholar walks his talk. When you read his answer to the first question below you can easily discern that since childhood, he has exhibited a giant heart and a most sensitive soul. He is a man who not only deeply cares for his friends, colleagues and students but also very much so for the future of humankind.

Born in Edgerton, Wisconsin, Krippner earned his B.S. (1954) at the University of Wisconsin, then his M.A. (1957) and Ph.D. (1961) at Northwestern University. As set forth in *The Encyclopedia of Parapsychology and Psychical Research*, he was introduced to things psychic at the age of 14 when he had a premonition that his uncle had just died, which turned out to be true. In 1953, while a student at the University of Wisconsin, he arranged, in spite of opposition, to have pioneering parapsychologist Dr. Joseph Rhine speak there. As director of the Kent State University Child Study Center, a position he assumed in 1961, he ran parapsychological experiments with student in addition to his regular

work involving children with reading problems and learning disabilities.

Like all the other early pioneers in the realm of transpersonal psychology, parapsychology, and related types of research, Krippner has borne the brunt of being labeled a charlatan and totally unscientific. Troglodyte materialist, reductionist and Darwinist academics have unrelentingly derogated and belittled his research efforts with great vehemence. For example, they ensured that his biography in *Wikipedia* was filled with scathing criticisms.

But all of this petty and nasty denunciation neither deterred nor discouraged him from continuing his groundbreaking research.

For several decades he served on the faculty of Saybrook University in San Francisco in the Department of Humanistic and Clinical Psychology and has written extensively on altered states of consciousness, dream telepathy, hypnosis, shamanism, dissociation, and para-psychological subjects and authored three books: *Human Possibilities: Mind Research in the USSR and Eastern Europe*; *Of the Siren: A Parapsychological Odyssey*; and *Shamlet: The Tragical History of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. His latest book, coauthored with Jennifer Ilias, is titled *Sex and Love in the 21st Century: An Introduction to Sexology for Young People*.

Most notably, he was instrumental in organizing and co-editing *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Scientific Evidence* originally published in 2000 as well as its second edition published in 2014. Additionally he has co-authored and co-edited dozens of other noteworthy books and journal articles. It was a privilege for me to interview him some years ago in his office at Saybrook University in San Francisco. Recently he has kindly assisted me in updating it.

What kind of altered-state experience, in particular, did you have that led you to spend your entire career researching anomalous phenomena that seem to question mainstream paradigms?

When I was a child, I had a number of unusual experiences that eventually directed me toward doing research and writing on this topic. For example, I was at a camp for young people

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Reflecting Light

Rick Darby

Is Dream Interpretation a Waste of Time?

Trying to understand the meaning of those fantastical scenarios we enact mentally each night has always allured mankind. Among the early dream interpreters we know of, Artemidorus flourished in the 3rd century AD at Ephesus, Roman Asia. He wrote a multi-volume *Oneirocritica* ("Interpretation of Dreams"). Robin Lane Fox in his *Pagans and Christians* discusses Artemidorus. Lane Fox goes to some trouble to counter the idea that Artemidorus was a loony. His methodology deserves to be called scientific. From *Pagans and Christians*:

"[Artemidorus] had spared no efforts to find out the truth. He had read his predecessors' books and developed theoretical distinctions of his own. He had associated with the despised 'street diviners,' with whom he had swapped experiences, and he had also visited the major games and festivals of 'cities and islands' from Italy to the Greek East, where he had questioned the spectators and competitors, the athletes, rhetors and sophists who attached such interest to dreams of their personal prospects."

Artemidorus was not easily enlisted into the ranks of soothsayers with simplistic explanations. Lane Fox says: "Research and observation, he insisted, were essential to the dream interpreter's art. In each case, he had to consider local custom, the oppositions of custom and nature and the dreamer's previous thoughts and wishes." In Homer, dreams are sent by the gods and goddesses, sometimes to instruct, sometimes to deceive, says B.F. Austin in *Glimpses of the Unseen*. "The prescience of Clytemnestra concerning the fall of Troy is represented as the result of a dream," he writes. "Plato believed in a divine manifestation to the soul in sleep. In the *Timaeus* the prophetic visions are represented as given in sleep. The Stoics reasoned that if the gods love men, and are omniscient and all-powerful, they certainly must disclose their purposes to men in sleep. The divine origin of dreams became a doctrine of the early Christian Church, and was defended by the fathers on biblical as well as classical authority." To understand and, in theory, to interpret individual dreams, we can ask what psychological and perhaps physiological purpose they serve. But while there are theories aplenty, none quite seems adequate to dreams' often vivid and compelling nature.

For Freud and his followers, dreams were plays

in which the monsters of the Id pranced in costume before the mind's eye. Jung had a more appealing explanation, a rear-view mirror look at humanity's collective unconscious amassed over countless generations; but his idea was no more susceptible of proof or even evidence than Freud's.



Henri Bergson — later awarded the Nobel Prize — wrote influentially (at the time) about consciousness and free will. For a philosopher, he was open minded, and accepted the honor of presidency of the Society for Psychical Research in 1913. But his notion of dreams was surprisingly materialistic. He believed dreams are an elaboration of sense perceptions received in sleep, from the body's internal processes as well as the external environment. He says, "The birth of a dream is then no mystery. It resembles the birth of all our perceptions. The mechanism of the dream is the same, in general, as that of normal perception."

These thinkers wrote without the knowledge since gained about the physiological aspects of dreaming, such as REM sleep. But those insights concern only the mechanism of dreaming, not its meaning or purpose. Post-Freudian theories tend toward analogies with data processing by the brain as computer. The garbage-control hypothesis suggests that the brain picks through impressions received in the daytime, trying to determine what is worth saving and what is not. Dreams are the outpicturing of this sifting. Another theory is that with so many new stimuli during the waking period, the brain must make new neural connections to handle the fresh load. Such information-processing interpretations of dreams, says Donald Watson in *The Dictionary of Mind and Spirit*, "are clearly a reflection of the way bureaucracies deal with records." The less than satisfying nature of so much dream interpretation can lead us to believe that dreams are psychological "noise." They are what they are and no more. Their alleged meaning similar to that imposed on other ambiguous phenomena — horoscopes, stock charts, oracular pronouncements, Bible verses, etc. Yet there is also overwhelming evidence that paranormal phenomena such as telepathy, precognition, and out-of-body experiences can manifest in dreams. Maybe normal, random dreaming is a kind of carrier wave that psi faculties can attach themselves to. That should be wonderful enough, even for those who are disappointed if dreams don't tell symbolic stories.

President's Message: Consciousness Awakening Events

A little more than two-and-a-half millennia ago, human thought began to develop in a wholly new direction. This is called the Axial age, and it occurred, coincidentally, all over the known world. Historians and scholars have noted this coincidence of history, but none have gone so far as to conclude that it amounted to reaching a natural new evolutionary level of intellectualism, spirituality and consciousness. In all world civilizations of that era, humanity broke away from old ways of thinking and entered a new age, essentially beginning what has evolved into our modern cultures, philosophies and science. This was a period of rapid fundamental change and mental development. Natural philosophy emerged in place of outright religion, although religion itself took on new philosophical and political aspects in a large part of the world. While historians document these changes, they cannot explain why they occurred worldwide; however, science can explain it. The collective human mind had reached the present level of human consciousness and spirituality.



Natural philosophy in ancient Greece, from Thales (625BC), Pythagoras and Anaximander to Aristotle (325BC), Euclid and Archimedes ushered in a period of introspection (logical perception and interpretation of the material world) into the external world of reality, rather than inward into the 'self,' while the eastern equivalent beginning with Lao Tzu (650BC) and Confucius (625BC) in China and The Buddha (625BC) and the Vedas in India began a long period of inward introspection and contemplation (looking at an intuitive reality of the mind and 'self' perceiving the external reality of the world). During and after the Axial Age, East and West pursued different paths toward their interpretations of and dealing with physical reality. Yet, there is no doubt that East and West developed along two different diverging lines of human thought, two different fundamental worldviews on how to cope with our place and role in the external world. But we can also call this historical period the Zeroth Scientific Revolution in the West, while corresponding philosophical changes in China took a similar amount of time took, called the 'Hundred Schools of Thought,' which ended in the Imperial period. In India the same period corresponded to the rise and spread of Buddhism down to its maximum influence with the spread of the Ashokan Empire throughout the Indian subcontinent and beyond.

The Greek natural philosophers of this era first noted that the most common and fundamental

'thing' in all of nature was 'change' and only later spoke of change in space and time. Next came the Scientific Revolution and rise of physics itself through Newtonianism, from Nicholas Copernicus (1545) to Isaac Newton (1687). Newton's new natural philosophy clarified the overall human concepts of space and time through reduction to 'changes' by successfully defining 'matter in motion' for the first time, initially through advances in theoretical astronomy and then through the abstractions of absolute space and time as opposed to relative space and time in the mechanistic worldview. Only relative space and time were necessary to explain the mechanical universe of matter in the new natural philosophy and science of physics. And finally, Max Planck (1900) and Albert Einstein (1905) initiated the Second Scientific Revolution by demonstrating that changes in space are not and could not possibly be independent of changing time and vice versa, thereby binding relative space and time together as a single mental abstraction of space-time in the form of a continuous whole. Einstein thus gave the abstract concepts of space and time a greater meaning and importance in the inner workings of our physical world than they had ever had before. Yet, Max Planck's discovery of the quantum of radiation initiated a conceptual change and subsequent advances in science that by 1927 brought about a quantum theory that split space and time apart (as defined and required by the Heisenberg uncertainty principle) in the sub-microscopic world, establishing the need for a later unification between relativity and the quantum.

These three periods, coinciding with the scientific revolutions, are coming closer together in historical time and each following revolution takes less time to move toward completion. This fact alone would suggest that we have already entered a new period of scientific and cultural change corresponding to a Third Scientific Revolution, one which will unify quantum and relativity. But this change will be different from the others because it will also unify science, spirituality and consciousness into the same fold. It will depend partially upon bringing the eastern and western cultural splits together, but it will also initiate a period of cultural and rational chaos to the world because it will amount to a new leap in the evolution of human consciousness. Given the present cultural and political chaos throughout the world, similar to but much grander than the Axial age, can anyone doubt that we are entering a period of conscious enlightenment on a broad worldwide scale? If not, we are in trouble. History is again repeating itself. Everyone needs to prepare for this eventuality.

— James E. Beichler, Ph.D.

Searchlight Media Watch

by Tom and Lisa Butler; NST

Teachers Use Meditation in Class: Between homework, tests, problems at home and in their social lives, kids are under intense pressure. More than a quarter of teens report feeling extreme stress during the school year. Teachers around the country are using the popular apps *Calm* and *Headspace* to introduce meditation to their lesson plans to help curb anxiety and improve performance in their classroom. *Calm* launched “Calm Schools” in May of 2016, giving kindergarten through 12th grade teachers around the world free access to some of the app’s meditation and mindfulness exercises. In just over two years, 54,000 teachers across 140 countries have signed up, with 41,000 from the U.S. *Competitor Headspace* takes a slightly different approach. It works directly with 35 districts and around 300 schools in 15 states to offer their teachers access to their mindfulness app.



The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages parents and teachers to teach kids meditation, saying it helps them function more effectively and clearly. A 2015 report by the National Institutes of Health found that teaching children mindful activities like yoga and meditation can improve their cognitive, social and emotional skills as well as their academic performance. One trial by the AAP found that teaching mindfulness in schools could even lower symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. *Calm Classrooms* research showed practicing mindfulness led to a 69 percent decrease in students disrupting classroom instruction, a 91 percent decrease in running or excessive noise in the hallways and a 72 percent decrease in fighting, bullying and disruptive behavior.

From: LaVito, Angelica. “Teachers use meditation apps in class to rewire kids’ brains, improve performance.” *CNBC*. 2018. cnbc.com/2018/09/30/teachers-are-using-calm-headspace-to-teach-mindfulness.html

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Induced NDE: Trained meditators can induce a state very similar to an NDE (near-death experience). A three-year study reported that 12 Buddhist monks were able to induce near-death experiences which scored at least seven on the Greyson NDE scale.

The researchers found that meditation-induced near-death experiences were associated with altered perception of time and space, and often involved encounters with non-worldly realms or beings. The participants also said they retained control over these near-death experiences and could decide when it began and ended. All participants reported that their MI-NDE began with them consciously reducing the degree of connection to their physical worldly body. Participants referred to this as a process of ‘gradual dissolution’... ‘letting go of body’... or ‘becoming untied’.

From: Van Gordon, William et al. “Meditation-Induced Near-Death Experiences: a 3-Year Longitudinal Study.” *Mindfulness*. 2018. link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12671-018-0922-3

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Sound Meditation has become quite popular in the last few years at meditation and yoga centers. Sound therapists tend to work with Tibetan sound bowls, crystal bowls, tuning forks, and gongs, among other vibrational instruments, to promote relaxation and stress relief in participants, Dr. Alejandro Chaoul, an assistant professor and Director of Education at the Integrative Medicine Program, Department of Palliative, Rehabilitation and Integrative Medicine at the University of Texas MD notes that while sound meditation may not have been researched extensively yet, there is a long tradition of using music therapy to treat autism, depression, substance abuse, and dementia. A 2013 study found that a chanting Tibetan sound meditation did provide short-term improvements in objective and subjective cognitive function as well as mental health and “spirituality” in breast cancer patients. There is a follow-up study being done in the U.S. and Brazil to replicate the findings and look at what kinds of changes these sound healings produce in the brains of participants via fMRI and EEG.



From: French, Kristen. “Saunas for Stroke and Hypnosis for Chronic Pain? Here’s What the Science Says.” *Endpoints*. 2018. endpoints.elysiumhealth.com/the-science-behind-alternative-medicine-1a3285a38142

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Best Self Improvement Apps: *The 10% Happier: Meditation for Fidgety Skeptics*, is listed as one of Google Play’s best self-improvement apps for 2018.

It claims to make meditation accessible and simple through daily videos, guided experiences and practical advice, offering a clear, simple approach to meditation. It also has a two-week class taught by Dan Harris (a former meditation skeptic and *New York Times* bestselling author) and Joseph Goldstein (a renowned meditation teacher). The app has a 4.7 out of 5 rating from over 5 thousand users.

Shine is another app rated high for self-care in 2018. Apple presented *Shine* as one of the best apps for self-care in 2018. Features such as daily texts or motivational messages can give you a boost in the morning, a break in the afternoon or help you wind down before bedtime. The app covers topics like self-love, anxiety and burnout, and is available for the iPhone.

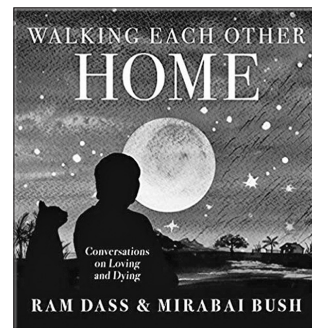
From: Newburger, Emma. "7 top-rated apps that will make you smarter, calmer and healthier in 2019." CNBC. 2018. cnbc.com/2018/12/20/apple-iphone-android-7-top-rated-self-improvement-apps.html

Hypnosis is still thought of as stage magic by some, but it has been the subject of rigorous study for many decades. It is a challenging subject to research because therapists use a wide variety of approaches, and it is near impossible to conduct a study that is double-blind — where neither the participant nor the practitioner knows if the therapy delivered is the real thing or a placebo. And yet, the current evidence suggests that patients treated with hypnosis may reap substantial benefits for several medical conditions: chronic pain, depression, PTSD, fatigue, anxiety, phobias and headache. For people with disorders like diabetes, it has been shown to help reduce stress, which can then lead to a reduced need for medication. Perhaps most remarkable, hypnosis has also been shown to be effective for gastrointestinal or digestive disorders, which can be notoriously difficult to treat, such as irritable bowel syndrome, colitis and even heartburn.

From: French, Kristen. "Saunas for Stroke and Hypnosis for Chronic Pain? Here's What the Science Says." Endpoints. 2018. endpoints.elysiumhealth.com/the-science-behind-alternative-medicine-1a3285a38142

Walking Each Other Home is the new book by Ram Dass. Dass, best known for his book *Be Here Now*, is older and on his own personal journey to death. His life experiences, the stroke that almost incapacitated him, his many spiritual travels and his studies have resulted in wisdom we can all use. What

is important for Ram Dass, currently near death, is love. He is delving into his deepest point and feels he is becoming one with the universe. Some quotes: "You must live before you can die, but you must also die before you can live," he says of opening to life and letting go of attachments. "Let go of the regrets and love the past for what it was and is ...," and "Death is a moment, and how we spend our lives in each moment is a rehearsal for death."



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Spirits of the Season: Scheduled for the first Sunday of Advent, the Dana Center at St. Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire (a Catholic College) was planning to have "An Afternoon of Mediumship." Billed as "Spirits of the Season," the event boasted of having world-renowned communication mediums John Holland, Lauren Rainbow and Tony Stockwell. The event flyer noted they will "share their own unique styles of Spirit Communication with the audience, bringing validation, love and healing energy." Parents were up in arms about the event and it was canceled within a day. The event planners moved the program from the campus to another location.

From: Carey, Anita. "Catholic College Cancels Occult Event After Backlash." *Church Militant*. 2018. churchmilitant.com/news/article/catholic-college-hosts-advent-psychedic-event

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Grave Humor: A custom casket can help make a funeral less somber. The trend started in Ghana, where it is widely believed that death is the beginning of an afterlife and the dead should receive a happy send off. The culture of customized coffins centers in the West African country of Ghana where people have been buried in adorned caskets since the 1960s when it was reserved for chiefs and priests. Mostly the designs center around people's jobs like a hammer for a builder, a camera for a photographer and this fish casket for a fisherman.



From: Edwards Rosy. "Fish, shoes and chilli peppers: Ghana's fantasy coffins are anything but grave." *Metro*. Co.uk. 2017. metro.co.uk/2017/10/21/fish-shoes-and-chilli-peppers-ghanas-fantasy-coffins-are-anything-but-grave-6979614/?ito=cbshare

INTERVIEW

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one summer, and I was wondering through the woods and simply run across a baby fawn lying unprotected in the grass. His mother was nowhere to be seen. And I was impressed with its beauty and fragility. And for a moment, I felt that I had become the fawn, that there was no dividing line between the two of us. And then this feeling expanded to nature in general, and I felt that I was a part of nature, and nature was a part of me, and that there was no harsh dividing line. Years later, I recognized this as being what many people call a “mystical experience.”

You and other scholars in your field hold William James in the highest regard and cherish his groundbreaking explorations in the fields of philosophy, psychology and psychical studies. What do you consider to be the methodological and substantive strengths of his *Varieties*?

William James’s seminal book, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, is very important for me. I read it as an undergraduate, and I still refer to it frequently. I think that James was a superb methodology. His term was “radical empiricism”; in other words, studying any type of human experience that is recorded, that is reported, that people are willing to talk about with no limits on what they explore. This is very different than some people in his day and some people even today who draw limits about what science can investigate, what psychologist can look at, what is considered legitimate science. With James, his openness led to the investigation of religious and spiritual experiences and other types of unusual experiences. And I think that this is why James is still such an important figure and such an inspiration for those of us who believe in the value of rigorous research.

Perhaps the most well-known chapter in James’s *Varieties* pertains to mysticism. What is your opinion of that chapter?

I think that one of the most interesting chapters in James’s book is Chapter 18 on mystical experience, and I can’t think of anything that surpasses it, even though many people have written excellent work in the last hundred years on the topic. The concept that he has of the Divine broadly defined and expanded, of course, and the eloquence in which he expresses his ideas and makes it available for research and evaluation, I think it’s something that we can still learn from. Of course, James is a pragmatist. And he was always looking at the fruits of one’s labor, the results of one’s belief system. And if something were, then we should pay attention to it. If something led to positive results, then we should pay attention to it. Although his pragmatism has been called “simple-minded” by some people, I think it is still a very good standard by which we can evaluate

our actions and other people’s actions and belief systems. I certainly think that what James called the “fruits test” – the fruits of one’s labor, “by their fruits you shall know them,” to quote the Bible, is still a very viable way, a very workable way to make an evaluation.

Clearly you and your colleagues, Etzel Cardena and Steven J. Lynn, in editing for the American Psychological Association *Varieties of Anomalous Experience* intended it to be a centenary recognition of William James’s *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, thereby lauding James’s daring and open-minded approach to the study of such phenomena. How did you structure your book?

We start out the book describing synesthesia, people who smell colors and here taste, very unusual, less than 1 percent of the population. Well, very few of these experiences, we could call mystical or spiritual. But then we move ahead: out-of-body-experiences. These are certainly unusual, very anomalous experiences. A few of these are spiritual, a few of these people come back and say: “That changed my life. I will never fear death again after having had that out-of-body-experience.” Well, we move on to parapsychological experiences and again, very few of those could be called spiritual in nature because they are puzzling, but very few of them open up people to a broader view of their spiritual-experience selves, but some of them do. But then we get onto the “near-death experience,” where maybe the majority of people report some sort of spiritual transformation as a result of being near death. And finally we end the book with mystical experience, and the mystical experiences almost inevitably have spiritual components.

What do you consider to be the greatest achievements coming from medical and social science since James wrote his *Varieties* in so far as the scholarship produced pertains to the subject matter covered in his classic text?

I think that James would be very pleased by the advances that have been made in the neurosciences. What we know about the brain, what we know about the immune system, what we know about other bodily systems, all are very useful in understanding what we call “consciousness” and all of the manifestations of consciousness. Now, in addition to what the neurosciences can teach us we also have to find out what human experience can teach us. And we investigate human experience with psychology, with phenomenology, with sociology, with anthropology, and we’re looking here at behavior, activity and parallel activities that match what’s going on with the brain and the rest of the body.

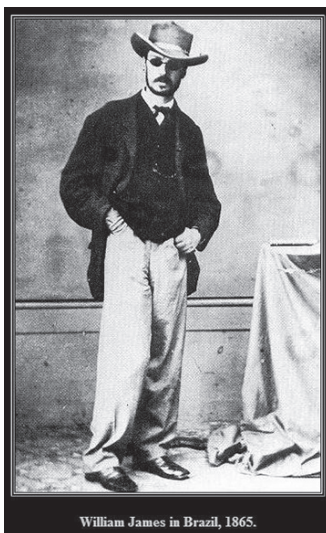
What do you foresee as significant areas of research

likely to take place in future decades?

Looking ahead to the next hundred years, I would start with the genome project. This mapping of the human genes is a tremendous advance, and this will help us in understanding the primary givens of our experience, and what it is that we inherit. And once we know that, we can piece together what the environment contributes to human behavior. And the environment broadly describes not only our experiences with parents and siblings and with peers, and eventually with teachers and employers and lovers and the like, but the natural environment. And by the natural environment, I don't only mean of this earth, but influences that we now consider electromagnetic, extraterrestrial. As some of the research that I've done with my colleagues on unusual dreams that we call "telepathic" dreams or "precognitive" dreams, "clairvoyant" dreams, indicate that these dreams are more likely to take place when there is a lack of electromagnetic storms in the atmosphere and when there is a lack of sunspot activity. So if this research leads anyplace, it might provide us a clue as to the very mechanisms of distant influence on the human organism. Now, once we understand that and put it together with genetic influence, I think we can make very great strides in terms of healing, not only healing of birth defects, physical defects through gene splicing and gene replacement, but also in terms of more complex human behavior, such as aggression, such as violence, such as antisocial behavior. How much of this is genetic in and how much of this results from early childhood rearing and later environmental influences?

And is there anything that we could do in terms of better education, better parenting, a more conducive environment for therapy? What about exploration of future human development in the realm of spiritual growth and evolution?

How do we awaken people to spiritual experience, to the question of values, to responsibility, taking action and taking responsibility for their actions? These are the areas that I think we are just now beginning to move into in the physical sciences, the social sciences, the behavioral sciences, and the trans-disciplinary sciences are beginning to pull



James, William, not Jesse

all of this together. Again seeing humans as part of a broader environmental picture, and seeing the ecology of human behavior is something that is important to understand in order to make life better for all of us.

Yet, you have pointed out many times there are limits to the capability of science to investigate the realms of human consciousness of a transpersonal nature.

Yes. Science has its limits. I think my friend Joseph Campbell put it very well when he said that the great mythologies of the world have always addressed four basic issues: How does the world work? What is a human being's place in society? How do humans make transitions in their lives? And how do human beings link-up with seeing beyond themselves? This is the spiritual aspect of mythology. Science can only address the first one, how the world works. Science cannot address the other great needs that human beings have. I called science the "Logos," the word. But there is also the "mythos," the mythology of it all. And this is sometimes philosophy, religion, the humanities and the arts have tried to address over the years, over the centuries, as a matter of fact. And I think that this need is still with us. I think the important question is, is there a God within? Is there a Divine Spark within that can make a link with the rest of nature, with the rest of sentient beings that can make people more responsible, more loving, more peaceful and give them a better grasp on how we can all get along together, not only with our fellow humans, but with the rest of natural existence and the rest of nature?

Clearly related to the notion of the Divine within is the matter of the acquisition of wisdom. Here again you have indicated that science seems limited in its ability to measure wisdom.

Wisdom is something else. I think that wisdom depends on another way of knowing. The "mythos" is the Latin word used, a mystical way of knowing, and intuitive way of knowing. And this gets us into something which does not rely on scientific method but relies more on direct experience with the Spark within, which can be called Divine, with the connections with the Divine without, with the union with Divinity, however people do find that word. And this might be something where people will find common grounds. Religion has not given people a common ground, but maybe the spiritual experience will give them a common ground. And this is the way of knowing that if anything will lead us out of the present dilemmas of the world, I think maybe this will. It will take us much further than science in terms of galvanizing popular support and maybe turning people around and helping them to realize that we all live on the same planet and we have to coexist together.

Intriguing Evidence From the Past

The Book & Newspaper Tests

Of all the evidence gathered supporting communication with spirits, the book and newspaper tests rank near the very top. "It is, of course, easy for the vociferous Sadducees of today to shrug their shoulders and assert that, as no evidence can establish such an impossible belief, they decline to waste their time in listening to nonsense," wrote Sir William Barrett, a distinguished professor of physics at the Royal College in Dublin. "They waive the whole matter aside with a superior gesture, confidently asserting that what cannot be explained by fraud, delusion, or subconscious memory is simply due to the 'will to believe.' But surely such agnostics might remember the ancient proverb; 'He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.'"

Sir William's comments had to do with the book and newspaper experiments conducted by himself and more extensively by Charles Drayton Thomas, a Wesleyan minister. Unlike most members of the clergy, Thomas did not see communication with the "dead" through mediums as a threat to his Christian beliefs. In fact, he saw it as supporting the basic tenet of Christianity — we do live on after death.

Like Barrett, Thomas was a member of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). His experiments, along with those of Barrett, were conducted with Gladys Osborne Leonard, a renowned British medium. "The primary purpose of these efforts was said [by my father] to be a demonstration that spirit people were able to do that for which telepathy from human minds could not account, a demonstration calculated to clarify the evidence already existing for the authorship of their communication," Thomas wrote in 1922.

Thomas said that it was his father, John Thomas, also a Wesleyan minister, who, posthumously, gave him the idea of the book and newspaper tests. It was during a sitting with Leonard early in 1917, that the father and son on different sides of the veil began collaborating in the experiments. The senior Thomas, who died in 1903, told his son that the tests had been devised by others in a more advanced sphere than his and the idea passed on to him. At the time, Drayton Thomas (he went by his middle name) had had over 100 sittings with Leonard, although later in his career that number exceeded 500.

Drayton Thomas would arrange a notebook on a table with a lighted lamp. Leonard would take a seat several feet from him and after two or three minutes of silence she would go into a trance. Suddenly, in a clear and distinct voice, Feda, Leonard's spirit control, would take over Leonard's body and begin using her speech mechanism while relaying messages from the senior Thomas and others in the spirit world. There was no similarity between Leonard's voice and that of Feda, who spoke like

a young girl. Moreover, Feda spoke with an accent and had frequent lapses of grammar.



Leonard

Occasionally, just after Leonard went into the trance state, Thomas would hear whispering of which he could catch fragments, such as, "Yes, Mr. John, Feda will tell him...Yes, all right..." Feda often referred to herself in the third person, e.g., "Feda says she is having trouble understanding Mr. John."

The idea behind the book tests was to communicate information gleaned by the father from a book in the son's extensive library. For example, in one of the earliest experiments, the father told the son to go to the lowest shelf and take the sixth book from the left. On page 149, three-quarters down, he would find a word conveying the meaning of falling back or stumbling. When the younger Thomas arrived home that evening after his sitting with Mrs. Leonard, he went to the book and place on the page, where he found the words, "...to whom a crucified Messiah was an insuperable stumbling-block."

The father explained to the son, through Feda, that he was able to get the "appropriate spirit of the passage" much easier than he could the actual words. However, over a period of 18 months experimentation, he found himself able to pick up more and more words and numbers, gradually shifting from "sensing" to "clairvoyance." It was made abundantly clear by the father that he was

experimenting on his side as much as his son was on the material side.

It was certain that Mrs. Leonard had never visited Thomas' house and knew nothing of the library of books in it. Realizing, however, that his subconscious might somehow have recorded such detailed information in the book when he read it years before as well as the exact location of the book in his library, Thomas decided to experiment with books in a friend's house. He informed his father of the plan so that the father knew where to search. In one of the tests there, Feda told Thomas that on page 2 of the second book from the right on a particular shelf, he would find a reference to sea or ocean. She added that the discarnate Thomas was not sure which, because he got the idea and not the words. When Drayton Thomas pulled the book from the shelf of his friend's house, he read, "A first-rate seaman, grown old between sky and ocean."

In another experiment, Drayton Thomas was told to look at page 9 where he would find a reference to changing of colors. Upon opening this book, Thomas found, "Along the northern horizon the sky suddenly changes from light blue to a dark lead colour." In still another test at his home, Feda told Drayton Thomas to go to a book at a certain point on a shelf and he would find words looking like "A-sh-ill-ee" on the cover. Feda explained that she was giving the sound but not the correct spelling. When Thomas arrived home, he went to the exact spot indicated by Feda and found a book authored by Mrs. Ashley Carus-Wilson.

Over a period of about two years, the father and son researchers carried out 348 tests. Of those, 242 were deemed good, 46 indefinite, and 60 failures. The discarnate Thomas explained the failures as his inability to get the idea through the mind of the medium or the medium's mind somehow distorting the message.

After conducting a number of book tests, the senior Thomas suggested a different kind of experiment – what came to call the "newspaper tests." These newspaper tests, which also involved Mrs. Leonard, began in 1919, some two years after the book tests. In the newspaper tests, the discarnate Thomas would provide information to be found in newspapers and magazines not yet printed. Thus, he would exercise a sort of precognition and clairvoyance. This would seemingly rule out what was being called Super ESP, the ability of the medium to go beyond reading the mind of the sitter

and tap into the mind of anyone having a particular knowledge of a subject.

In a test on January 16, 1920, the junior Thomas was told to examine the *Daily Telegraph* for the following day and to notice that near the top of the second column of the first page the name of the place he was born. Thomas was born in Victoria Terrace on Victoria Street in Tuanton. When Thomas checked the paper the following day, he found the word "Victoria" exactly where his father said it would be. In a test on February 13, 1920, Thomas was told to go to the *London Times* of the following day and near the top of column two of the first page he would find the name of a minister with whom he (the father) had been friendly when living in Leek. Lower in the column, he would find his (Drayton's) name, his mother's name, and an aunt's name, all within a space of two inches. When the paper appeared the morning after the sitting, Thomas saw no familiar names relative to the minister friend. He then consulted with his mother who immediately called his attention to the name "Perks," informing her son that George T. Perks was a friend of his father's and had visited him while they were living in Leek. Looking lower in the column, Thomas found his name, a slight variation of his mother's name, and an aunt's name, all within a space of 1 ¼ by 1 ½ inches.

Many other newspaper tests were carried out by Drayton Thomas. In each case, he would immediately write down the information and file it in a sealed envelope with the SPR at a time before the type was set at the newspaper office. Further, Thomas would check papers from at least 10 other days, being sure that the same names did not appear in those editions, thereby ruling out coincidence. Some of the tests were inconclusive and a few were failures, but there were many more positive results.

When Thomas asked his father how he was able to obtain information from newspapers not yet typeset, the father replied that he didn't quite understand it himself. He referred to it as some kind of "etheric foreshadowing." He likened it to seeing the shadow of a man around the corner before actually seeing the man. "Now the things I see are frequently but the spiritual counterparts of things which are about to take form; some of my tests from the *Times* might be called shadows of a substance," the discarnate Thomas explained. "When you see a shadow it is but an outline, and you do not look for detail, and that explains the difficulty of these tests; we cannot always sufficiently observe detail." He further explained that as he had moved from sensing to seeing, he could not always see the word clearly, as in one case he gave the word "rain" for what proved to be "raisin."

Still, however, the "Sadducees" snicker, sneer, and scoff.

– MET



Thomas



Padre Pio: Irish Encounters with the Saint,
by Colm Keane, Capel Island Press, County
Waterford, Ireland, 2017, 213 pages

This book contains a few dozen stories about Padre Pio, the twentieth century Italian saint, as reported by various citizens of Ireland and collected by author Keane, an award-winning Irish writer with six number-one best sellers, including *Padre Pio: The Scent of Roses* and *Padre Pio: The Irish Connection*. According to Keane, Pio had a special love for the Irish.

In the Introduction, Keane offers a little background on Pio, beginning with his first stigmata (the five wounds of Jesus) on September 20, 1918, at age 31. It was while the friar was saying prayers after Mass that he was overcome by a sense of peacefulness, then observed the crucifix in the choir loft transformed into an “exalted being,” whose hands and feet dripped blood. After the being disappeared, Pio began oozing blood from his hands, feet, and side. The wounds, and related pain, remained with him for 50 years, until his death in September 1968. It was reported that he lost a cupful of blood through the wounds each day and that his body temperature registered up to 118 degrees Fahrenheit even when he was well. (His “normal” temperature was said to be 108 degrees, which would be fatal to most people.) Other phenomena reported with Pio were the ability to heal, a scent of roses about him, bilocation, precognition, levitation, and telepathy.

It wasn’t long before word reached the masses about Padre Pio. “People flocked to the friary at San Giovanni to get a glimpse of this extraordinary man,” Keane writes. “They crammed into his Masses, queued for interminable hours to attend his confessions, and waited by doors or in corridors to receive his blessing or to touch his robes. Women, in particular, were drawn to him, arriving each morning to seek his absolution at confession or to beg his intercession over family concerns.”

However, Pio was subject to much disparagement during the early years, especially from within his own church. The Archbishop of Manfredonia, Pasquale Gagliardi, claimed that Pio perfumed himself, wore makeup, was involved with women, and was “demon-possessed.” As a

result, he was debarred from saying public Mass or from hearing confessions, and was moved to a friary away from public view. After public protest, Rome moved him back to San Giovanni, although his public ministry was not restored until some 15 years later.

Meanwhile, as the stigmata continued, doctors differed as to the cause. One saw it definitely as of supernatural origin; another concluded that it was the power of suggestions supported by the use of chemicals, while still another speculated that it was beyond medical science.

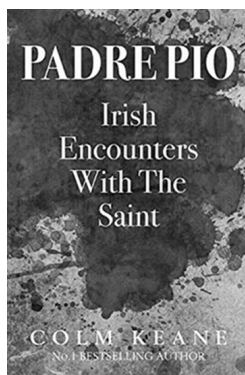
Following the Introduction, the book is divided into three chapters or periods, the early years (1918-49), the middle years (1950-59) and the later years (1960-68).

One story of possible precognition and healing was reported by Irish journalist Alan Bestic. It involved a laborer named Giovanni Savino, who lived in San Giovanni and frequently attended Pio’s mass, while also visiting with him in the sacristy. On one visit in 1949, Pio told Savino to have courage and not worry. The message was repeated on two occasions, but he Pio would not elaborate. A week or two later, he suffered severe injuries on the job when dynamite exploded in his face. His right eye was supposedly destroyed and the left eye badly damaged. Padre Pio received word of the accident from Savino’s doctor and said he would pray for him and receive “the Grace.” That night, Savino, while lying in the hospital, both eyes bandaged, he felt two taps on his right eye, then smelled violets. He recognized it as the perfume that sometimes surrounds Pio, what was called “the odour of sanctity.” He then heard the voice of Padre Pio, telling him that he has received the Grace. The next morning, when his eyes were unbandaged, he could see perfectly. The doctor said it was impossible and called it a miracle.

In spite of the miracles credited to him and his sainthood, Padre Pio had a side that would not appeal to today’s feminists and might even result in the extremists calling for his decanonization. That is, he would not permit women in miniskirts or slacks to attend Mass in his church and their heads had to be covered. Moreover, only men were permitted to have their confessions heard in his sacristy.

Whatever his shortcoming as measured by today’s standards, it appears clear from the many stories in this book that Padre Pio was a man of this world and “not of this world.”

— Michael Tymn



Why Religion? A Personal Story, by Elaine Pagels, Harper Collins, 2018, 244 pages

For the last 40 years – from Elaine Pagels' *The Gnostic Gospels*, published in 1979, to *Why Religion?*, published last year – Gnostic teachings have provided Pagels with her life's most prominent beacon. "What I love about sources like the [Gnostic] *Gospel of Thomas* is they open up for more than a single path," Pagels explains. "Instead of telling us what to believe, they engage both head and heart, challenging us to 'love your brother as your own life' while deepening spiritual practice by discovering our own inner resources..."

The most conspicuous themes within her latest book concern the death and aftermath of her five-year-old son Mark and a year later her husband Heinz, plus her views on Orthodox Christian dogma and related theological questions, early ecclesiology and what it means to be a Christian. Pulling no punches, she informs us that "'Christianity' is a huge, messy heap of traditions, stories, images, and practices, collected by people all over the world – much of that may be of value, and much that may not."

What impressed me the most were the less noticeable aspects of her book which reveal the relationship between her inner exploration and the mystically Gnostic dimension of how she sought to find the Kingdom inside of herself as well as outside. Within that context what I found most fascinating was that her attempts to discern a rational reason for such grievous suffering failed and what apparently provided her a large part of the relief she was seeking consisted of an expanded consciousness which transported her into the depths of extrasensory perceptivity coupled with a soul-deep sense of being intimately connected with the Divine Source. Out of genuine humility Pagels refers to her episodes of altered states of consciousness as a function of her "imagination."

For example, when her one-year-old son Mark was taken to the hospital the night before his heart surgery she stayed in the room with him lying on the hard floor and unable to sleep.

"Hours later, around four in the morning, I was startled by ... a menacing being, male but in human form [who] approached me, smelling like danger, wordlessly threatening death – Mark's death ... the dark figure retreated. But when he came toward us a second time, even more frightening. Again I longed to run, but resisted, and managed to stand

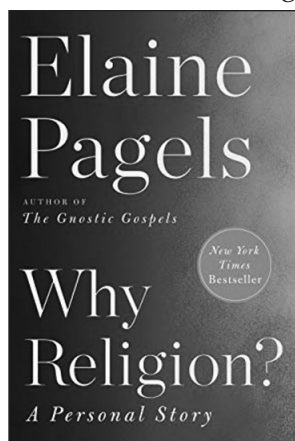
against him. Once again he retreated, only to return a third time, more terrifying than ever. Feeling that I could not possibly stand a moment longer, I spoke a name: 'Jesus Christ!' At that, the dangerous being fled, and my fear dissolved. Now I felt certain that the surgery would go well." The next day Mark's surgery was successful.

About five years later, when she sensed that Mark's death might be imminent, she took him to the hospital. She tells us that while having his blood drawn little Mark lost consciousness "[S]ix or seven physicians converged in a treatment room, placed Mark on a table, and worked to revive him ... at a certain moment I sensed that his life left his body, and the intimate connection we'd been sharing suddenly seemed to break... I somehow felt that Mark could hear us; I felt his presence near the ceiling of the room. ...but he did not regain consciousness; shortly after that, the heartbeats stopped...I also sensed that he'd felt a burst of joy and relief to leave his exhausted body...I was astonished, seeming to sense that Mark was all right, wherever he was, and that he was *somewhere*."

Then a year later, Pagels was forced to encounter the accidental death of her husband Heinz, who fell off a cliff in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, then dropped 300 feet to a horrible death with his body and blood splattered all over the rocks below. She explains her agony: "How to go on? Questions kept recurring: Where do they go? How can somebody so intensely alive suddenly be gone? What happens? Where are they? Somewhere, or nowhere?" Pagels strained to find the Kingdom of God within her. After an agonizing search she discovered "that the kingdom of God is not an actual *place* in the sky – or anywhere else – or an *event* expected in human time. Instead, it's a state of being that we may enter when we come to know who we are and come to know God as the source of our being."

Pagels found further guidance from the *Gnostic Gospel of Truth* which emphasizes "how connected we are with one another and with 'all beings' ...[It] reframes the Gospel narrative.

Instead of seeing suffering as punishment, or somehow as, 'good for you' this author sees it... an essential element of human existence, yet one that may have the potential to break us open out of who we are. My experience of the 'nightmare' – the agony of being isolated, vulnerable, and terrified – has shown that only awareness of that sense of interconnection restores equanimity, even joy." – *David Stang*



Changed in a Flash, by Elizabeth G. Krohn and Jeffrey J. Kripal, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, Calif., 2018, 339 pages

"I was dead, but I was more alive than when I had been that twenty-eight-year-old woman with the child and the umbrella in the synagogue parking lot a few seconds earlier," author Elizabeth Krohn recalls her near-death experience after being struck by lightning in 1988. "I was surrounded by and suffused with an unutterable feeling of unconditional love."

In Part One of this book, Krohn tells of her experiences and its life-changing effect, while in Part Two, Jeffrey Kripal, a professor of religion at Rice University and codirector of Esalen's Center for Theory and Research, provides his interpretations and analysis.

Krohn was in the parking lot of her synagogue when she experienced a blinding light, deafening explosion, and crackling energy "all hitting me at once, changing, charging, and charring me." Krohn then found herself in a garden that is beyond description and she immediately came to understand that time is not linear. Knowledge came to her in the voice of her beloved grandfather, although she now doesn't think it was her grandfather. Whoever the "guide" was explained to her that it was her choice to return to earth, and, if she did, she would have a third child, a daughter. This daughter had already selected her and her husband Barry as her parents, leading Krohn to believe that reincarnation is a fact.

When Krohn returned to life, she was not the same person she had been. "The new Elizabeth would see life in varying shades of gray," she explains. "Nothing would be black and white ever again. I was simply not the rigid, opinionated, well-defined person Barry had married." The changes resulted in a later divorce, after the predicted third child, and remarriage.

The other after effects of the NDE included the ability to see auras, precognition, and synaesthesia, the latter described as a neurological phenomenon in which a person might "hear" colors, "see" music, and "taste" shapes. She also claims to have received a phone call from her deceased grandfather in the middle of the night, her bedroom being filled with "odourless smoke" as her grandfather talked with her.



Included in her precognitive "nightmares" were the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, the landing of US Airways Flight 1549 on the Hudson River in 2009, the Japan earthquake and tsunami of 2011, and the crash of TransAsia Airways Flight 235 during 2015. She was in Jerusalem at the time of the Hudson River landing with her second and current husband, Matt, when she had the dream and sent an email to herself, noting, "Mid-size commercial passenger jet (80-150 people) crashes in NYC. Maybe in river. Not Continental Airlines, Not American Airlines." She further recalled that she saw people standing on the wings. Her dream was some seven and a half hours before the plane, captained by Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, crash landed on the Hudson.

"As I have come to understand things, I now believe that the reason for the lightning strike was to help me, to really make me understand that death is not the end of life," she writes. "I have also begun to reckon with the complexities of free will." She adds that her guide told her that being struck by lightning was "in the contract" before she was born.

Raised in Reform Judaism, Krohn laments the fact that her faith did not prepare her for her NDE and had no answers for her after it took place. She didn't begin to get answers for it until many years later, after corresponding with Dr. Bruce Greyson of the University of Virginia and then meeting John Price, an Episcopalian priest who works with people who have had NDEs. "This priest lent credibility to my near-death experience, something I had searched in vain for when I tried to speak to my own clergy about my experiences," she offers, stating that her attempts to speak to four different rabbis at her synagogue were mostly dismissive and seemingly uncomfortable for them. After meeting co-author Jeffrey Kripal in 2015, the pieces really fell into place. Specifically, in the second half of the book, Kripal offers historical contexts, cross-cultural comparisons, and interpretive strategies aimed at better understanding such extraordinary experiences. Much of what Kripal writes is abstruse and is as difficult to conceptualize as it is for many of us to grasp quantum physics. Essentially, it seems to boil down to being able to understand and reconcile a timeless universe with the linear one most of us are experiencing. How are we to understanding living past, present and future lives all at the same time? Yet, he provides much food for thought. "Perhaps time flows both ways at once," Kripal ends the story, "as a kind of a snake biting its own tail, in a constant return, in a loop of mind and matter that none of quite understands yet but in which all of us are caught all the time."

— Michael Tymn

In Times of War: Messages of Wisdom from Soldiers in the Afterlife, edited by Jonathan Beecher, White Crow Books, UK, 2019, 149 pages

This is an anthology of 10 stories primarily from World War I and WWII, involving messages that came through credible mediums from the “dead” as well as from near-death experiencers. The book was prompted by the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I last November.

The prevailing message of the stories has to do with the immediate post-death state, which frequently involves confusion, even unawareness that the person has in fact transitioned from the material world. To put in more bluntly, many people don’t immediately know that they have died. It’s as if they are in a dream they can’t escape from.

Indications are, not only from this book but from many others like it, that having foreknowledge of what happens immediately after death can help a person avoid such confusion and more alertly awaken to the reality of the afterlife environment. To that end, this book offers much.

The Preface by editor Jon Beecher is a fascinating story in itself as he tells of his own “awakening” to the reality of a spirit world. Leading a very materialistic life and not believing in life after death, Beecher had a rude awakening in 2000. “I just banged my head and woke up to a whole new worldview,” he summarizes his 11-page story.

Beecher begins the chapters with the story of Private Dowding, now something of a classic in the metaphysical genre. Dowding was a 37-year-old British soldier killed on the WWI battlefield. Communicating through the automatic writing mediumship of Wellesley Tudor Pole, Dowding told of his initial confusion. “If there is a shock, it is not the shock of physical death,” Dowding explained. “Shock comes later when comprehension dawns; ‘Where is my body? Surely, I am not dead!’” He recalled that he saw two friends carrying his body on a stretcher and assumed that he had been injured, although he was confused by the fact that he was walking behind them and yet seeing his body on the stretcher. “I seemed in a dream. I had dreamt that someone or something had knocked me down. Now I was dreaming that I was outside my body. Soon

I should wake up and find myself in the traverse waiting to go on guard.”

In another story, a Polish pilot was shot down and killed in the crash. However, as he remembered it, he got out of his crashed plane, ran to hide from the Germans, and encountered some French peasants. When he asked them for help, they did not appear to see him. At some point, he came to realize he was no longer occupying his physical body. “What you expect here, that you find,” he communicated through a medium. “You build your awakening, it is just as you imagined, at least that is what they told me. I expected nothing, so nothing came. But now I am pulling out of the difficult doldrums and am beginning to feel my strength.”

A British tank officer recalled falling face downwards in a swampy mud and then being unconscious for a time in something of a nightmare. “It was a time of conscious paralysis,” he communicated. “I hated it, and when something snapped and I was free, I was awfully relieved.”

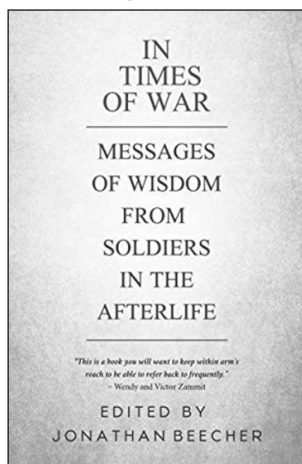
Another classic in the field from which this anthology draws is Elsa Barker’s *Letters from a Living Dead Man* in which Barker sets forth messages received from David Patterson Hatch, a lawyer and judge who had transitioned in 1912. “Day in, day out, these unfortunate earthbound ones live over and over again the emotions of war; night after night, they dread the morning when the sounds will begin again. They cannot get away...”

It is never quite clear as to how long in earth time it takes for the departed soul to recognize he or she has given up the ghost. In the case of Alfred V. (believed to be New York sportsman and socialite Alfred Vanderbilt), who was one of many victims on the *Lusitania*, which was torpedoed by a German submarine on May 7, 1915, it seems to have been more than a year. On November 5, 1916, he communicated with Dr. Carl Wickland, a psychiatrist, through the trance mediumship of Wickland’s wife, Anna, claiming to be hungry and cold and his clothes all wet. Dr. Wickland then helped him understand his condition.

In the book’s Conclusion, Beecher notes the saying, “You are what you eat,” and suggests that after physical death “we are what we think.” A person’s “moral specific gravity” or his “goodness” during the earth life, seems to factor into the awakening process, but, from the stories in this book, indications are that a conviction that the soul lives on in a greater reality significantly expedites the awakening process.

This book is recommended for any person who thinks he or she might die at some time in the future.

– Michael Tymn



Tangible Dreaming, by August Goforth, Tempestina Teapot Books, New York, 2019, 29 pages

This is small but inexpensive book about the Tangible Dream Experience (TDE). Such dreams are, author Goforth explains, not at all like typical night dreams – the kind that most of us don't recall upon awakening. "Essentially, Tangible Dream Experiences are another kind of lucid dreaming," he continues, "yet quite different because the Dreamer is consciously aware of the physical sense of touch – that is, the bioform is relaying to the Dreamer's consciousness that something apparently physically tactile is occurring."

Goforth is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice in New York City and is also a spirit medium. He is the co-author *The Risen:*

Dialogues of Love, Grief & Survival Beyond Death.

"Unless the Dreamer is well-acquainted with the TDE, she would usually be unable to be very lucid about anything," he further explains. "It is like waking up in another world, but not knowing one's name, where one came from, or how one got to that particular geography." One dreamer of TDE's reported being visited by entities from another galaxy, while another TDE dreamer



concluded that entities were manifestations from past lives. Goforth goes on to say that TDE's have been happening to him for many years and it took quite some time for him to work through the fear and the awe of the experience, and then to utilize his attendant consciousness to analyze the situation and regulate his emotions.

Although I have had a few memorable dreams during my lifetime, I am not sure, based on Goforth's discussion of the common elements of the TDE, that I have ever experienced a TDE, and so I struggled somewhat to grasp what these dreams are all about and how to deal with them. More developed minds might be able to better understand Goforth's experiences and advice.

"It is possible that the phenomenon of Tangible Dream Experiences are not necessarily ones that have been with those in Modern Western society for very long," Goforth says. "The TDE could be a sign of the trans-evolution of humankind that so many say they sense is approaching – one of the countless transmutations in modern spiritual development that may happen – and often do – at any moment."

– Michael Tymn

Ponder on This

"Acceptance of the findings of near-death researchers would mark the beginning of the end of a culture whose driving forces have been greed and ambition, and which measures success in terms of material possessions, wealth, reputation, and social status. The present culture, therefore, has an enormous vested interest in undermining near-death research, which it does through ignoring, debunking, and otherwise marginalizing the research.

"More subtly, our culture has created an atmosphere of 'taboo,' for want of a better name, around any serious discussions of spirituality. This is why we tend to feel uneasy and awkward in discussing these things with colleagues. To avoid these feelings of discomfort and anxiety generated by the taboo, academics try to protect themselves by employing the same strategies that everyone uses to avoid anxiety.

"The first strategy is denial. By paying no attention to the research, by ignoring it and dismissing it a priori, the academic is spared the uncomfortable feelings that would arise from violating the taboo. The second strategy is to debunk, to explain away, and to otherwise marginalize the research, and sometimes even the researchers themselves."

– Neal Grossman

(from "Skeptical About Skeptics"
– to be reviewed in June issue)

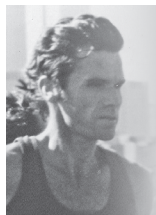
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Practicing Death

To practice death is to practice freedom — Michel de Montaigne

Michael Tymn



The Resurrection Paradox

In a 2001 movie, *The Body*, the bones of Jesus were supposedly discovered by an archeologist in a tomb in Jerusalem. A Vatican priest was dispatched to investigate and concluded that the body was indeed that of Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph. The priest was so shattered by the finding that he lost all faith and committed suicide. A few years later, *Titanic* filmmaker James Cameron claimed that the tomb of Jesus had been found. Cameron called the evidence compelling, although I gather that the evidence was far from conclusive.

From a fundamentalist Christian standpoint, those stories seemingly pull the carpet from under the resurrection story, completely ignoring the teachings that we have a spirit body in addition to a physical body. If scientists happened to link up the DNA in the bones found in the tomb with blood residue found on the Shroud of Turin, it wouldn't affect my faith in Christ in the least. That's because my brand of Christianity rejects any literal interpretation given to a physical body rising from the dead, either by Jesus, or by the masses on some far-off day of resurrection.

Paul told us that in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians when he said that the body that has to be "raised" is not the body that was buried. He used the analogy of a grain of wheat, pointing out that the grain of wheat that is planted is not the grain of wheat that is raised. Of course, like so many other things in the Bible, there can be so many self-serving interpretations.

My faith today is based on psychical research. Such research in the area of the near-death experience (NDE) and apparitions strongly suggests that we all have an etheric body that separates from the physical body at the time of death and vibrates so far beyond the physical shell that it is not seen by ordinary eyes. That etheric body has also been referred to as an astral body, spirit body, celestial body, soul, and higher self, although these terms are also sometimes given different interpretations. Some schools hold that there are several bodies.

NDE and other out-of-body research also suggests a "silver cord" connecting the etheric to the physical body, sort of a counterpart of the umbilical cord. Once that cord is severed, physical death is

complete. While undergoing some aspects of dying and death, the NDEr does not experience complete severance of the cord and thus is able to return and tell of his or her encounters with celestial beings.

In Ecclesiastes 12:6-7, we read: "Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Concomitant with the belief that the physical shell is resurrected is a belief in "soul sleep," holding that we "sleep" until that day of judgment when all bodies rise from their graves. However, here again, we run into assumptions that the word "sleep," as used 54 times in the

Old Testament and 18 times in the New Testament, should be interpreted to mean total unconsciousness. Indeed, modern psychical research suggests that we awaken on the "other side" in degrees of consciousness equal to the degrees of spirituality achieved in the earthly life. The benevolent and enlightened soul will experience no real "sleep," while the depraved and unenlightened soul may be so unconscious as to not realize he or she is even "dead" and may require years in earth time to regain consciousness, perhaps experiencing a "fire of the mind," i.e., hell, while struggling to regain true consciousness after experiencing the illusion of reality in the physical realm.

"The duration of the state of confusion that follows death varies greatly," explained Alan Kardec, the pioneering French psychical researcher of the 19th Century. "It may be only a few hours, and it may be of several months, or even years," Kardec wrote. "Those with whom it lasts the least are they who, during the earthly life, have identified themselves most closely with their future state, because they are soonest able to understand their new situation."

So why should Christianity fear the discovery of the bones of Jesus? Credible scientific research has revealed that it has absolutely no bearing on the message of soul's immortality that he came to give. How paradoxical that something that should reinforce Christian doctrine – at least provide evidence that he, in fact, lived – is perceived as threatening it!





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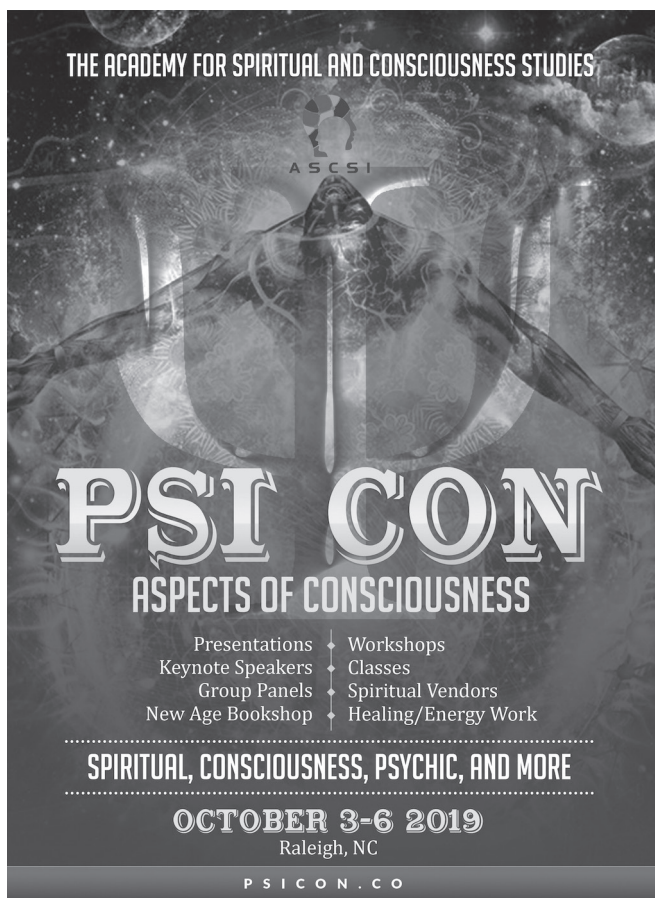
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MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of The Academy for Spiritual and Consciousness Studies, Inc. is to discern, develop and disseminate knowledge of how consciousness studies and paranormal phenomena may relate to and enhance the development of the human spirit.

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The Searchlight— April 2019



Words of Wisdom

“...since everything we experience shapes what we are capable of understanding, I’ve interwoven this personal story with the work that I love; acknowledging such connections helps us to understand the past and illuminate the present. Many of us, of course, have left religious institutions behind, and prefer to identify as ‘spiritual, not religious.’ I’ve done both—had faith, and lost it; joined groups and left them. To my own surprise, I then went back, seeking to understand what happened, and to explore how the stories, poetry, music, and art that make up religious traditions have grown out of specific communities and institutions, yet sometimes still resonate. What matters to me more than whether we participate in institutions or leave them is how we engage the imagination – in dreams, art, poetry, music—since what each of us needs, and what we can engage, obviously differs and changes throughout our lifetime. What fascinates me most are the experiences that shape, shatter, and transform those who initiate or engage them—experiences that precipitate us into new relationships with ourselves and with others. For that, and for you, I offer this writing.”

– Elaine Pagels

(from *Why Religion?* – see review pg. 11)